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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

BOOK NOTICES.

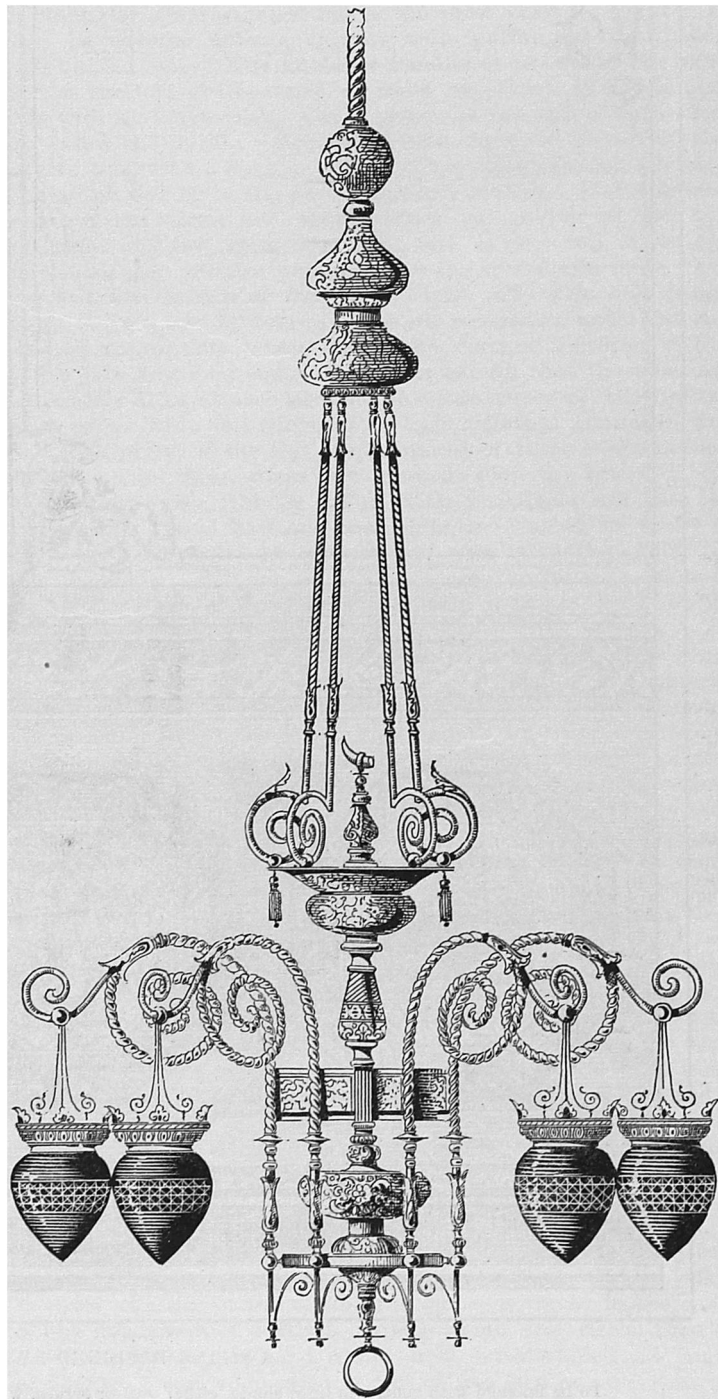
THE reception of a bundle of books marked "From HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & Co., Boston," must ever send a little thrill of anticipatory delight to the heart of a booklover. The well known taste and judgment with which they select manuscript from the hundreds of packages sent to them, and the exquisite accuracy and neatness of the dress in which they clothe them, render their publications a standard choice wherever volumes are sold. Their later issues contain among the list: James Russel Lowell's "Democracy and Other Addresses," most of them having been uttered on various occasions in England, but also containing the famous Harvard address, and one of the most delightful essays on "Books and Libraries," spoken on the opening of a free library at Chelsea, Mass., in 1885. A masterly dissertation on "Don Quixote" and a simple, heartfelt and eloquent speech on the death of Garfield at the Memorial Meeting, Exeter Hall, London, are included, and can but add to his enduring fame. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps touches brain and heart again in her gem of a story, "The Madonna of the Tubs." It is full of the strong, fresh, ever-new, ever-old passion, pathos and joy of humanity. Love, subtly permeating the very atmosphere of the common-place scene, in Helen Ritter's secret pain: in the sad-sweet mother-love of the "Madonna," in the strong, wilful but hearty and genial character of "Henry," and the unsearchable goodness which surrounded them all, is shown in a quiet way, in delicate touches and simple narrative, and whoever reads in vain, and cannot take to consciousness the lesson conveyed, must be dull indeed. Trust, consideration, forbearance, charity are all taught here, with a tenderness and beauty which cannot be denied. In many respects S. Weir Mitchell, M.D., in his new novel entitled "Roland Blake," speaks clearly to the experience and emotions, with a clean-cut and well-defined *dramatis personæ*, quite distinct as to conception and portrayal. He has the power of making his people live, breathe and act in so marked a way that we *know them*, cannot forget them, consider them our friends and acquaintances. There is not one dull or uninteresting person in the book. Each is so cleverly created that one might suspect, as is often the case with fine novels, that the authors had drawn them from life. Octopia, the grandmother, even "Addenda Pennell," with his eccentric perdelictions are all flesh and blood people, while the story is well-shaped and ably told, through a series of natural yet unexpected sequences to a happy end. Of "In The Clouds," by Charles Egbert Craddock, one can but say that those who have read and admired her earlier volumes, "In The Tennessee Mountains," and "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains," will find this book a supplement, or continuation of a series, all descriptive of the same style and kind of scenery, character and incident. Varying as to plot, and taking up different types of the same general people, in these three novels she seems to have grouped the members of a whole community in types, and placed them under influences and among circumstances which shall bring out their strongest characteristics and passions. The dialect, the secret whiskey still, the "Moonshiners," the hiding culprit, the sheriff, the posse of men, the jail and the trial are all repeated, while outside, in anguish of ignorance and love, determination and courage, again stands a woman, or a figure at once pathetic and attractive. The great lonely hills, the herders and "the harnt," silence and solemnity in nature, the rough, uncouth, savage, comical and reckless in humanity: these are the pictures painted with words of eloquence and genius. But as before, we murmur to ourselves when we have finished, "How melancholy! How full of unuttered and unutterable sadness are lives like these: no matter how happy they may be in their poverty and common-place! Grand and lofty as nature may be about them, she seems to fail to uplift the soul! Her mountains, instead of inspiring, seem to crush them, and their whole advancement seems to consist in a fleeting, material joy, which even then, pales before it bursts into a flame."

LIBER AMORIS, bound in a beautiful design on the cover and issued by that firm whose publications are ever marked by taste and elegance, TICKNOR & Co., of Boston, is a new poem, which has all the attraction and fascination of a novel. It is a story, but it is told in lines of exquisite beauty, every thought or hint of thought being molded into the sweetest and noblest expression. Nature and human passion find their voice here interpreted into language so rich and flowing, so delicate and musical, that we read as much for the beauty and rythm as for the absorbing interest of the plot. Elevation of sentiment, Christlike charity and goodness streams through the whole in illuminating rays, while not one touch which is not pure, or idea which is not true lowers the tone of general excellence. It is a poem of which our country should be proud, although its plot is laid in a foreign land. Can not this artist now take up a theme which shall portray some picturesque situation in America, and clothe it with the music of his verse.

THEORIZING upon art has been the passion and pastime of many who have admired pictures and sculptures, or who have had access to libraries of volumes upon art matters. The average book treating of this is so general in its ideas and so flighty and disconnected in its propositions, that the literature is neither exciting nor beneficial. Mr. JOHN C. VAN DYKE has written PRINCIPLES OF ART, and in his earlier chapters where he devotes his efforts to the history of those principles, he is exceedingly entertaining, for while his facts are such as are open to any one, he has grouped them effectively and pleasingly. When he reaches the theoretical chapters and indulges in surmises, conclusions and prophecies, he becomes as wandering as those who have gone before him, and leaves us none the richer in mind at the end in anything but historical incidents. (FORDS, HOWARD & HURLBURT).

SO MUCH has been written about oil painting with the purpose it seems of instructing the beginner or inexperienced in the handling of brushes and the manipulation of colors and so much of it has been worthless, that we are disposed to look upon further efforts in this direction as waste material. A MANUAL OF OIL PAINTING, however, has been written by Hon. JOHN COLLIER that is genuinely useful and practically valuable; it gives a great many suggestions that are good and is written in a style that indicates its author to be possessed of the sort of common sense that makes it possible for him to instruct those of less experience. It is the most sensible book on the subject that we know of. (CASSELL & Co., Limited, New York).

A COMMON CHORD, a story of the Ninth Ward, has been received and read. We read it so as to save others the same affliction. It is a combination of slang and morality that is meaningless and absurd. Such books bring everything they assume to support into derision.



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